UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Logistics Operations School
Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools
PSC Box 20041
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MTAC 3103

STUDENT OUTLINE

MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Terminal Learning Objective(s):

(a) Given the billet of a major subordinate motor transport chief and references, identify the steps within the Marine Corps planning process, per the references. (35xx.05.04)

(b) Given the billet of a major subordinate motor transport chief and references, participate in the development of an operations order, per the references. (35xx.05.05)

(c) Given the billet of a major subordinate motor transport chief and references, prepare a motor transport movement order, per the references. (35xx.05.06)

2. Enabling Learning Objective(s):

(a) Given the billet of major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, identify the functions of planning. (35XX.05.04a)

(b) Given the billet of major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, identify the prinicple considerations of the Marine Corps planning process, per the references. (35XX.05.04b)

(c) Given the billet of a major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, identify the steps of the Marine Corps planning process, per the references. (35XX.05.04c)

(d) Given the billet of a major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, describe the Amphibious Planning Process. (35XX.05.4d)

(e) Given the billet of a major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, describe the Rapid Response Planning Process. (35XX.05.4e)

(f) Given the billet of a major subordinate command motor transport chief and references, identify the combat service support (CSS) planning documents. (35XX.05.4f)

OUTLINE

1. PLANNING MODELS

a. Executive / National Command Authorities (NCA)

(1) National Command Authority: President and Secretary of Defense

(2) National Security Council: President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

(3) No formal planning model

(4) Personality driven

b. Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES) / Joint Staff and Commander in Chiefs (CINC's)

(1) Joint planning and execution system

(2) Formal process for deliberate and crisis action planning

(3) CINC's are a combatant command

(a) 5 Geographic CINC's: ACOM, EUCOM, CENTCOM, PACOM, SOUTHCOM

(b) 4 Functional CINC's: SOCOM, SPACECOM, STRATCOM, TRANSCOM

c. Joint Task Force (JTF) planning

(1) Designed to link JTF operations to JOPES

(2) Ties tactical and operational execution to the strategic planning process

d. United States Military Services: Depends on each service’s roles and missions, service traditions, and service culture.

e. Amphibious planning

(1) One of the most complex

(2) Requires detailed planning

(3) Unique command relationships impact the process

f. Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2) / Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) Special Operations Capable (SOC)

(1) Abbreviated process based on a 6 hour execution window from receipt of the mission

(2) Dependent on unit Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's)

g. Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP) / Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)

(1) Major modification of FMFM 3-1, Command and Staff Action

(2) Formalized in MCWP 5-1, Marine Corps Planning Process

(3) Utilized by all three MEF's

2. PLANNING IN MANEUVER WARFARE. As stated in MCDP 5, proper planning is essential to the execution of maneuver warfare. Because the occurrence of war will not unfold like clockwork, one cannot hope to impose precise, positive control over events with a perfect plan. The best that can be hoped for, is to impose a general framework of order on the disorder and “fog of war”, in order to set a general flow of action, rather than seeking a way to control each event. Thus a flexible approach to planning must be taken that allows response to direction from the National Command Authority, while simultaneously being able to quickly adapt to operational and tactical situations. The MCPP provides a way to do this. This process, in concept, is applicable across the range of military operations, and at any echelon of command. Regardless of the situation, time available, events, and staff structure, this process can serve the commander’s needs. The MCPP supports the commander’s decisions in a time sensitive environment by incorporating flexibility and, when required, enabling intuitive or recognitional decision making. But, the MCPP is less of a process and more a way of thinking and a way to organize thoughts. The process is focused on the threat, is based on the tenets of campaign planning and maneuver warfare, and capitalizes on the principles of unity of effort and maintaining operational tempo.

a. Fundamental planning activities. Marine Corps doctrine establishes the fact that the planning process must balance two ways of thinking; analysis and synthesis. As defined by Merriam -Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (Tenth Edition, Copyright 1994 by Merriam-Webster, Inc.), analysis is "the separation of a whole into its component parts" and synthesis is "the composition or combination of parts or elements so as to form a whole; the combining of often diverse conceptions into a coherent whole." MCDP 5 summarizes these activities as follows:

(1) Analysis can be used to turn a broad concept of operations into a practicable plan by decomposing the concept into individual tasks. What analysis cannot do is make the creative decisions that are central to the planning process.

(2) Synthesis is the creative process of integrating elements into a cohesive whole. Creativity is essential to the process of synthesis.

b. Types of planning

(1) Decision. Decision planning occurs before the decision has been made. Decision planning supports the actual command decision making process by helping to develop an estimate of the situation and by generating, evaluating, and modifying possible courses of action.

(2) Execution. Execution planning occurs after the decision has been made. Execution planning translates an approved course of action into an understandable and executable plan through the preparation of plans or orders.

(3) Deliberate. Deliberate planning is performed when sufficient time is available and there is no advantage to be gained by acting more quickly. Deliberate planning is performed well in advance of expected execution, often during peacetime or before the initiation of a deliberate operation. Deliberate planning relies heavily on assumptions about circumstances that will exist when the plan is implemented.

(4) Rapid. Rapid planning is performed when time is short, or there is an incentive to act quickly. Rapid planning is generally based on current conditions and is more responsive to changing events. Rapid planning tends to be less formal than deliberate planning.

(5) Forward. Forward planning involves starting with the present conditions and laying out potential decisions and actions forward in time, identifying the next feasible steps. The

envisioned end state serves as a distant and general aiming point throughout planning.

(6) Reverse. Reverse planning involves starting with the envisioned end state and working backward in time toward the present, identifying the next-to-last step, the next before that, and so on. Reverse planning focusses on the long term goal and is possible only in relatively predictable situations. To plan effectively in reverse, we must have a clear and relatively permanent goal in mind.

c. Functions of planning and plans

(1) Proper planning will accomplish the following:

(a) Direct and coordinate action

(b) Develop shared situational awareness

(c) Generate expectations

(d) Support the exercise of initiative

(e) Shape the thinking of planners

(2) Improper planning will cause the following mistakes:

(a) Attempting to forecast events too far into the future

(b) Trying to plan in too much detail

(c) Applying a scripting process to prescribe friendly and enemy actions with precision

(d) Setting inflexible / lockstep routines that produce rigid plans that overly emphasize procedures

d. The components of a plan are as follows:

(1) A desired outcome

(2) Actions intended to achieve the desired outcome

(3) Resources to be used

(4) A control process by which we can supervise execution

3. MCPP BACKGROUND. FMFM 3-1, Command and Staff Action, served

commanders well for many years. But with the advent of a new philosophical way of viewing the nature of war (maneuver), it has become obsolete and cumbersome. It was deliberate by nature (very methodical which led to being time consuming), heavily staff section oriented (removes the commander), followed a staff section pecking order (stove-piping), was 15 sequential steps long, and the manual itself was 498 pages. The MCPP helps organize the thought processes of a commander and his staff throughout the planning and execution of military operations. It focuses on the threat and is based on the Marine Corps warfighting philosophy of maneuver warfare. Since planning is an essential and significant part of command and control, the MCPP recognizes the centrality of the commander in planning. It capitalizes on the principle of unity of effort and supports the establishment and maintenance of tempo. The MCPP steps can be as detailed or as abbreviated as time, staff resources, experience, and the situation permit. The defining features of the planning challenge are time and uncertainty. More than anything else, considerations of time and uncertainty dictate the approach to planning.

a. Time. The reality of warfare is that time is often the most scarce resource and is vital to planning. The commander must adjust the planning process to make optimum use of this perishable resource. When time is critical, the commander's intuition, judgment, and experience are invaluable in guiding his staff and subordinate commanders.

b. Uncertainty. All planning is based on imperfect knowledge and involves assumptions about the future. Planning by definition is future-oriented, and the future by nature is uncertain. Uncertainty increases with the length of the planning horizon and the rate of change in the environment. Given the fundamentally uncertain nature of war, planners must recognize that the object of planning is not to eliminate or minimize uncertainty, but to allow the commander to decide and act effectively in the midst of uncertainty.

The MCPP applies to command and staff actions at all echelons. From the Marine Corps Service Component to the battalion / squadron level, commanders and staff members must master the MCPP in order to be full participants in integrated planning. Additionally, the MCPP complements deliberate or crisis action planning as outlined in JOPES.

4. TENETS OF THE MCPP. The tenets of the MCPP are derived from the doctrine of maneuver warfare.

a. Top-down Planning. Planning centers on the commander. His intent and guidance are central to planning. The commander

uses planning to gain knowledge and situational awareness to support his decisionmaking process. His plan, communicated in oral, graphic, or written format, translates his guidance into a design for actions by his subordinate commanders that will accomplish the mission.

b. Single Battle Concept. The single battle concept effectively focuses the efforts of all the elements of the force to accomplish the mission. A commander must always view the battlespace as an indivisible entity because operations or events in one part of the battlespace may have profound and often unintended effects on other areas and events. While the battlespace may be conceptually divided into deep, close, and rear to facilitate planning and decentralized execution, the commander’s intent ensures a single battle by providing unity of effort.

c. Integrated Planning. Integrated planning provides a functional approach that is systematic, coordinated, and thorough. It is organized within the warfighting functions of maneuver, intelligence, fires, logistics, command and control, force protection. Warfighting functions are the means by which a force plans and executes operations. The key to integrated planning is appropriate representation of these functions within the command, via representatives, and between commands, via liaison officers.

5. THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS. The MCPP establishes procedures for analyzing a mission, developing and analyzing courses of action (COA's) against the threat, comparing friendly COA's against the commander’s criteria and each other, selecting a COA, and preparing an operation order for execution. The MCPP organizes the planning process into six manageable, logical steps. It provides the commander and staff a means to organize their planning activities and transmit the plan to subordinates and subordinate commands. Through this process, all levels of command can begin their planning effort with a common understanding of the mission and commander’s guidance. The six integrated steps of this process are:

a. Mission Analysis. The purpose of mission analysis is to review and analyze orders, guidance, and other information provided by higher headquarters and produce a unit mission statement. Mission analysis drives the MCPP. It includes:

(1) Receipt of the mission

(2) Mission analysis

(3) Determining information requirements

(4) Initial staff orientation

(5) Restated mission

(6) Warning order

b. COA Development. During COA development, the planners use the mission statement (which includes higher headquarters tasking and intent), commander’s intent, and commander’s planning guidance to develop several COA's. Each prospective COA is examined to ensure that it is suitable, feasible, different, acceptable, and complete with respect to the current and anticipated situation, the mission, and the commander’s intent. In accordance with the commander’s guidance, approved COA's are further developed in greater detail. It includes:

(1) Commander’s planning guidance

(2) COA development

c. COA Analysis. During COA analysis, each friendly COA is examined against selected threat COA's. COA analysis involves a detailed assessment of each COA as it pertains to the threat and the environment. COA analysis assists the planners in identifying strengths and weaknesses, associated risks, and asset shortfalls for each friendly COA. COA analysis will also identify branches and potential sequels that may require additional planning. Short of actually executing the COA, COA analysis provides the most reliable basis for understanding and improving each COA. Each COA must be scrutinized for suitability, feasibility, flexibility, and acceptability. It includes:

(1) Staff estimates

(2) Wargaming

d. COA Comparison and Decision. In COA comparison and decision, the commander evaluates all friendly COA's against established criteria and each other, and then selects the COA that is most likely to accomplish the mission. It includes:

(1) Commander's estimate of COA's

(2) Commander’s decision

(3) Concept of the operation

(4) Warning order

e. Orders Development. During orders development, the staff takes the commander's COA decision, intent, and guidance, and develops orders to direct the actions of the unit. Orders serve as the principal means by which the commander expresses his decision, intent, and guidance. It includes:

(1) Preparation of the order

(2) Commander's approval

(3) Issue the plan / order

f. Transition. Transition is an orderly handover of a plan or order as it is passed to those tasked with executing the operation. It provides those who will execute the plan or order with the situational awareness, and rationale for key decisions, necessary to ensure there is a coherent shift from planning to executing. It includes command and staff supervision.

5. AMPHIBIOUS PLANNING PROCESS

a. Amphibious planning is a 15 step deliberate planning process, proceeding from the receipt of the initiating directive to termination of the operation. Amphibious planning procedures are characterized by the following:

(1) Detailed planning. Amphibious operations require the most detailed planning of any operation. Planning will be of such detail that it limits the flexibility otherwise enjoyed by subordinate commanders.

(2) Parrallel planning. Planning by parrallel chains of command refers to the planning procedures resulting from the close and continuous coordination necessary between corresponding naval and landing force echelons of command.

(3) Concurrent planning. Planning by two or more echelons of the same command that is conducted simultaneously.

b. Amphibious planning is continuous and comprises a series of analyses and judgements of the situation, each stemming from those which have preceded. Fundamental to the preparation and completion of detailed plans for an amphibious operation is the rendering of certain sequencial basic decisions. These basic decisions are based on interrelated factors of concern to both the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and Commander Landing Force (CLF) and will effect every element of the Amphibious Task

Force (ATF). The basic decisions, listed in sequence, are as follows:

(1) Selection of ATF general course of action. CATF and CLF select a general course of action that will accomplish the mission assigned in the initiating directive.

(2) Selection of ATF objectives. These objectives may be identified in the initiating directive, or will be selected by CATF and CLF, and will serve as a basis for determining the Landing Force (LF) mission and concept of operations ashore. ATF objectives are labeled as a letter (ATF Obj A).

(3) Determination of LF mission. CLF develops a mission for the LF and obtains concurrence from the CATF. The LF mission is developed from the ATF mission in the initiating directive, CLF mission analysis, and the ATF objectives.

(4) Designation of landing sites. Landing sites are designated by CATF within the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA). A landing site is a continuous segment of coastline over which troops, equipment, and supplies can be landed by surface means. It can vary in width from that of a single landing beach to the entire length of usable coastline within the objective area.

(5) Determination of LF objectives. The CLF determines the physical and terrain objectives, the capture of which is necessary to accomplish the LF mission. LF objectives are labeled as a number (LF Obj 1).

(6) Selection of beachheads. A beachhead is a designated area on a hostile shore or potentially hostile shore which, when seized and held, ensures the continuous landing of troops and materiel and provides maneuver space requisite for subsequent projected operations ashore. It is the physical objective of an amphibious operation and is designated by the CLF.

(7) Selection of the landing area. The landing area is that part of the objective area within which the landing operations of an amphibious force are conducted. The landing area includes the beach, beach approaches, transport areas, fire support areas, air occupied by close supporting aircraft, and the land included in the advance inland to the initial objective. CATF designates the landing area following concurrence of the CLF.

(8) Formulation of the LF concept of operations ashore. It gives an overall picture of the operation, including the formation for landing and scheme of maneuver for accomplishing

the LF and ATF objectives. The CLF formulates the LF concept of operations ashore and presents it to CATF for supportability.

(9) Selection of landing beaches. A landing beach is that portion of a shoreline usually required for the landing of a battalion landing team. CLF selects specific landing beaches from available landing sites within the selected landing areas.

(10) Selection of helicopter landing zones (HLZ's). An HLZ is a specified ground area for landing assault helicopters to embark or disembark troops and / or cargo. A landing zone may contain one or more landing sites.

(11) Selection of fixed-wing aircraft LZ's and drop zones (DZ's) for airborne and air-transported operations. CLF consults with the airborne troop commander and air commanders and selects the LZ's and DZ's. CATF reviews the selected zones for supportability.

(12) Selection of the tentative date and hour of landing. If not specified in the initiating directive, CATF, after consulting with CLF, selects the tentative date (D-Day) and hour (H-hour for waterborne, L-hour for helicopterborne) of landing.

6. Rapid Response Planning Process

a. Background

(1) MCO 3120.9A requires a MEU (SOC) "To provide the geographic combatant commanders a forward-deployed, rapid crisis response capability by conducting conventional amphibious and selected maritime special operations under the following conditions: at night, under adverse weather conditions, from over the horizon, under emissions control, from the sea, by surface and /or by air." Additionally, "The unique immediate response utility of the MEU(SOC) requires that it be capable of commencing mission execution within 6 hours of receipt of the warning or alert order. This may range from the insertion of reconnaissance and surveillance assets to the launch of an assault force."

b. Overview

(1) The deliberate planning process, taken independently, is suitable for the requirements of the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) / Marine Expeditionary Unit Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC)) program. Although, because of the unique constraints placed upon the units to conduct rapid execution of certain specialized missions, it is necessary to compress the planning sequence in terms of time and paperwork. Therein lies the purpose of the Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2).

(2) An abbreviation or a combination of certain steps may occur during R2P2. The limited time available to conduct planning requires that only vital information be addressed.

(3) Split ARG operations. It is reality that today's forward-deployed ARG / MEU(SOC)'s will spend some, if not most, of their time physically seperated from each other. It is for this reason that the R2P2 process be understood not only by the ARG / MEU(SOC) command elements, but that units / ships are also proficient in the process and can conduct R2P2 effectively. During a 1997 ARG/MEU(SOC) deployment, the AGR / MEU(SOC) team deployed for 195 days, of which only 22 were spent together. The remainder was done in some form of split ARG configuration (1 or 2 ship configurations). This included exercise and real world operations.

c. Requirements

(1) This planning process requires enhanced organizations, equipment, and training.

(2) Commanders and staffs must have a solid foundation in deliberate planning. The planning process must be standardized, detailed, parallel, and concurrent with command and staff action procedures that are understood by all the members of the ARG / MEU(SOC) team.

(3) Decision makers must have a detailed knowledge of the potential mission profiles, and these mission profiles must have standardized task organizations and equipment lists.

(4) Due to the compressed schedule associated with R2P2, operational preparation is being conducted simultaneously with the planning process. It is imperative that information flow is expedited to ensure common situational awareness and proactivity throughout the ARG / MEU(SOC) team.

(5) The six hour standard. R2P2, employed in a time compresse planning sequence, is designed to use standardized crisis action procedures, concurrent / parallel / detailed planning actions, standardized confirmation briefs (instead of written operations orders), readiness checklists, drills, and rehearsals.

(a) 1.5 Hours for Crisis Action Team (CAT) procedures (receipt of mission through COA decision)

(b) 1.5 Hours for detailed planning

(c) 1 Hour for confirmation brief (issuance of the order)

(d) 2 Hours for command and staff supervision

(6) The CAT's mission is to rapidly assess a situation, quickly develop and select the best course of action which successfully accomplishes the mission, and provides the commander's guidance for detailed planning. The CAT consists of the MEU(SOC) commander and his principal and special staff, Amphibious Squadron (Phibron) Commander and his staff, and major subordinate element (MSE) commanders (ACE, CSSE, GCE) and identified staff members.

7. CSS PLANNING DOCUMENTS

a. Logistics / Combat Service Support estimate

(1) The estimate is a rapid assessment by the G-4 / S-4 of logistic capabilities and limitations for each proposed COA. It analyzes the COA under consideration to provide the logistic aspects of relative combat power. The estimate helps determine the most desirable and most supportable COA from the CSS standpoint. Additionally, this document provides the basis for later planning.

(2) The estimate looks at the six logistic functional areas. Additionally, the estimate compares requirements, available assets, problems, limitations, advantages, and disadvantages of each COA. It also determines what actions are necessary to overcome any problems or limitations. If any COA is not supportable, the estimate specifically states this.

b. Annex D

(1) Annex D reflects the commander's plans, guidance, and directions for employment of logistic capabilities. This annex complements the concept of operations and amplifies paragraph 4 (administration and logistics) of the operation order. Annex D begins with the concept of operations and the supporting concept of logistics. It assigns tasks and responsibilities for logistics and CSS among the elements in each functional area. It also identifies support required from external agencies. Finally, it provides guidance and informatin for planning, coordinating, and executing MAGTF logistic operations.

(2) The Annex D contains the concept of logistics and CSS. This concept is a broad statement of the essential logistic and CSS tasks involved in supporting the concept of operations. It is the basic unifying foundation for subsequent development of

detailed logistic and CSS plans and orders by the MAGTF elements.

(3) The MAGTF G-4 / S-4, in coordination with other staff sections and subordinate S-4's, prepares the Annex D. Each subordinate organization down to the battalion and squadron level publishes an Annex D. Optionally, they may use paragraph 4 of the operation order to provide logistic guidance to subordinate units.

c. Combat Service Support Element operation order

(1) The CSSE operation order states the mission of the CSSE, establishes task organizations, and assigns missions to each subordinate unit. It also states the CSSE commander's requirements, priorities, and allocations for accomplishing the mission.

(2) The CSSE operation order amplifies information normally contained in standard operating procedures concerning CSS provided to other MAGTF elements. Primarily, it provides specific guidance and direction to subordinate CSS units regarding their tasks and missions. The CSSE G-3 / S-3 is responsible for preparing the CSSE operation order. The CSSE G-4 / S-4 prepares the Annex D to the CSSE operation order.

REFERENCES:

1. FMFM 3-1, Command and Staff Action

2. Joint Pub 1-02, DOD Definitions

3. Joint Pub 3-02, Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations

4. Joint Pub 5-03.1, Joint Operation Planning and Execution System, Vol 1

5. MCDP-5, Planning

6. MCO 3120.9, Policy for Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operation Capable)

7. MCWP 4-11, Tactical-Level Logistics

8. MCWP 5-1, Marine Corps Planning Process

9. MSTP Pamphlet 5-0.3, MEF Planner's Reference Manual

10. SOTG, Standardized MEU(SOC) Training Handbooks Vols. I, II, III, IV